



Shared Stories, Safe Spaces

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Shared Stories, Safe Spaces

An Intercultural Northern Ireland

Policy Brief



Breda Friel, Philip McDermott

School of Applied Social and Policy Sciences
Ulster University

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Rationale for Evaluation/Research

This report examines the quality and sustainable outcomes of the Shared Stories, Safe Spaces' Project, developing a policy position paper using case study evaluation. Delivered by the North West Migrants Forum (based in Derry~Londonderry), the programme's aim was to strengthen social cohesion and inclusion by improving attitudes between young people (YP) from BME communities and YP from the two largest communities in Northern Ireland, Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist (PUL) and Catholic Nationalist Republic (CNR). The project engaged and supported YP from diverse backgrounds to explore the life stories of migrants - which also relate to their own experiences. This included a consideration of a range of both contemporary and historical stories about those who have left N.I to live elsewhere and also contemporary stories about people who have come to live here. Central to the project was the current question of immigration internationally and how societies deal with cultural diversity.

The experience of Northern Ireland and elsewhere indicates that there is a connection between hate related crimes, racism towards minority groups and sectarianism (Knox, 2011: 388). For example, studies regarding integrated schools in NI suggests that the contact hypothesis has been the major influence underpinning cross-community programs, including educational initiatives. Therefore, there is a need for early intervention whilst working with YP to create safe spaces and to reflect ongoing demographic change in the regions as part of this process.

Given this backdrop, the Project's aim was to contribute to the creation of a safe community for all. The project encouraged and supported YP to engage with others through interaction and also brought groups and individuals together in a series of panel and photographic exhibitions to showcase the shared learning associated with the programme.

The project emerged from an earlier Focus Group Discussion (FGD) between YP of different backgrounds to enhance relationships and build strong connections. As a result, 27 YP (9 from each community, ranging in ages from 6 -16 years, were recruited to take part in their own participatory research. This involved 12 exploration workshops and 2 days of Treasure hunt on migration, including visits to the Ulster American Folk Park, the Titanic Visitor's Centre in Belfast and a Migration Film day. The final stage was the preparation of a collaborative exhibition which corresponded with the writing of this policy brief.



Figure 1 - Participants exploring the historical experience of migration in Ireland at the Ulster-American Folk Park, August 2017

Objectives and Research Methodology

The aim of this report is to review the data generated by the Shared Stories, Safe spaces project and to make subsequent policy recommendations. In the development of this policy brief the authors have interviewed key subjects involved in the project's delivery, conducted a thematic evaluation of secondary data and also observed a number of events and activities which were part of the initiative.

The objectives of this brief study are:

- To provide an overview of relevant approaches relating to understanding perceptions/notions of intercultural dialogue.
- To situate the literature within wider discussions globally on such policy development.
- To present the findings for consideration and dissemination which will include conclusions and/or recommendations

Methodology and Data Collection

This study involved articulating the data generated by the Shared Stories, Safe Spaces project using a qualitative approach. Literature and document analysis was completed to inform the research questions and background to the study. In order to develop understanding of the project, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key interviewees. Data collection also included observation of focus group activities (x3) involving YP at three stages of the programme. To address the questions and allow for

articulation of the subject matter a qualitative design was considered most suitable. The rationale was to employ data collection methods that would elicit subjective responses of participants, thus allowing identification of key themes to inform findings and recommendations in this policy brief.

Context and Literature Review: Diversity Policies in a National and Global Context

This section of the report contextualises the study and provides an overview of relevant literature relating to the emergence of more diverse societies, the challenges arising given this diversity, and the responses to that diversity both nationally and internationally.

Northern Ireland is not unique in its quest to attain better social cohesion. Many societies now attempt to promote diversity through social policies and initiatives which aim to harness 'difference' as a positive and enriching force. The rationale for this has often been driven by the perception that an apathetic response will result in limited interaction between peoples of different backgrounds in such multicultural places. For example, the notion of race relations policies in Britain which developed from the 1960s onwards were instigated due to government concern of a lack of interaction between new migrants and the wider host population. However, the implementation of such early 'diversity' policies were often ill-defined nationally due to their implementation at the level of local government authority. By the early 2000s, public debates frequently characterised British society as a "community of many different communities". This was reflected in the Runnymede Trust's influential, but controversial, policy piece 'The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain' which suggested that ethnic minority groups could both express their identity as British as well as maintain their heritage identity simultaneously (Parekh, 2000). However, criticisms have continued to exist which note that British policies to promote diversity are still characterised merely as an accommodation of different migrant groups with little attempt to promote dialogue between them which has provided the conditions for a segregated UK along the lines of ethnicity.

These concerns continue to be at the forefront of UK government policy as exemplified by the Casey Review, published in December 2016, which called for a greater effort at creating community cohesion and promoting 'British values' such as English language learning to migrant communities (Casey, 2016). The sense here, however, is that many policies place their focus firmly at the feet of migrant communities themselves and a limited role/responsibility is placed on majority host populations to contribute to the fostering of a sense of belonging for everyone. Global economic crises and 'Brexit' have problematised even further the relationship between the UK state, the majority non-migrant population and migrant communities. This is a pattern which has also been witnessed elsewhere and socio-economic insecurities have also led a number of countries which had previously championed policies of cultural diversity and social cohesion, notably the Netherlands,

Denmark and Italy, to question such policy approaches (see Kymlicka, 2012: 14).

By contrast, Canada, has often been considered as the most developed region in terms of its diversity policies having incorporated an official national approach to Multiculturalism within its constitution in 1971. The existence of the English-speaking, French-speaking, First Nations and migrant populations were considered as fundamental elements of the Canadian national identity. Individuals from all of these groups are considered as part of the fabric of Canadian identity and are thus part of the jigsaw in creating a sense of social cohesion. This somewhat contrasts with the examples above where the concept of 'cohesion' has been largely considered as the responsibility of minority groups such as migrants.

Canadian approaches indicate, therefore, that 'multiculturalism' is a model which ensures that "all citizens keep their identities, take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging" whilst at the same time instilling a wider sense of common citizenship (Canadian Government, 2018a). For instance, the Canadian government's current programmes to support multiculturalism include the "Inter-Action: Multiculturalism Funding Program" which promotes the three themes of:

- Intercultural/interfaith understanding
- Civic memory and pride
- Respect for core democratic values (Canadian Government, 2018b)

In achieving these objectives, the role of YP is central as is the use of youth schemes and knowledge-sharing initiatives between individuals from different groups such as Summer camps. Canada's approach, whilst still termed 'multiculturalism' in its official policy, advocates a more robust sense of discourse and dialogue between individuals and groups. Thus, these methods can be attributed the status of an intercultural model. Much of the agenda presented here bears resonance with current debates and developing approaches in Northern Ireland and this confirms Canada's role as an international leader in the development of diversity policies which have intercultural dialogue at their core.

Indeed, intercultural dialogue has also become more prominent within debates on UK and European policy. The EU, for example, has defined intercultural dialogue as:

a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange or interaction between individuals, groups and organisations with different cultural backgrounds or world views. Among its aims are: to develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and practices; to increase participation and the freedom and ability to make choices; to foster equality; and to enhance creative processes (EU 2018).

These debates on enhancing interaction and meaningful exchange between groups, therefore, are applicable to Northern Ireland with both its traditional divide between Protestants and Catholics and also its increased diversity brought by immigration - especially from 1998-2008 (McDermott, 2016).

For instance, the results of the most recent census exercise indicated that 4.5% of the population of Northern Ireland were born outside Great Britain and Ireland. The comparative figure just ten years previously was 1.5% (NISRA, 2011). The recent European elements of migration are, of course, combined with the existence of long-established migrant communities which have been in the region for many decades. In addition, there is also an increase in individuals coming from beyond the EU. All of this renders the belief that Northern Ireland is merely a region of two communities as deeply problematic.

These alterations have also occurred during the transition from conflict to a relative 'peace' when policy makers have emphasised the need to create both a Shared Future and to improve levels of opportunity and further equality for all. Questions relating to the legacy of the conflict ensure that British and Irish identities also continue to have deep relevance. Consequently, the very debates on respecting and understanding all forms of cultural diversity have become a feature of wider efforts to eradicate the potential for a return to violent conflict whilst also advocating a wider recognition of more plural society. For example, the Together Building a United Community strategy notes that

Good relations across all parts of our community are an essential ingredient of building a prosperous, peaceful and safe society which is enriched by diversity and is welcoming to all. Specifically, tackling the twin blights of sectarianism and racism, in addition to other forms of intolerance, is essential in shaping a shared and cohesive community that can move forward and collectively face the challenges of an ever-changing world (TBUC, 2013: 10).

Thus the objectives of government initiatives, such as these, and the Shared Stories, Safe Spaces project align.

Such considerations, however, do not come without their challenges. The dynamics of migration in recent years have changed dramatically due to the emergence of economic uncertainty and of course the instability around the nature of the UK's departure from the EU. Since the onset of the international financial crisis in 2008 the subsequent lack of opportunity, resulted in greater levels of outward migration from Northern Ireland. Whilst movements of people into Northern Ireland continued there were also increased levels of emigration from within both the PUL and CNR communities, meaning that the theme of migration is a common one (See Devlin Trew, 2014).

Further challenges in this context have also included well-documented racist attacks against new migrants. Social attitudes surveys such as the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey have indicated increasing levels of prejudice against Muslims which follows trends from other parts of Europe (McDermott, 2015). Moreover, longstanding negative attitudes towards indigenous ethnic minorities such as Irish Travellers continue (Ibid.). Therefore, the Shared Stories, Safe Spaces project aimed to contribute positively to this challenging environment by using the ethos of intercultural dialogue described above whilst focusing on the common theme of migration.

About the Organisation and Project

Established in 2012, North West Migrants Forum (NWMF) offers support to migrants, having identified the need for an advice and support service in the Derry city council area and its environments, particularly for those from a black and minority ethnic background. North West Migrants forum has informally supported individuals in need of health access, legal advice and practical support. NWMF advocates for better support and services for migrants specifically from the black and minority ethnic background, asylum seekers, refugees and non-EU migrants in the North-West region.

The aim of Shared Stories, Safe Spaces outlined by NWMF, was to “strengthen social cohesion and inclusion by improving attitudes between YP from ethnic minority (BME) communities and the two-major communities, Protestant (PUL) and Catholic (CNR)”. Using a range of engagement methods, YP from diverse backgrounds were supported to explore life stories of migrants - which may well relate to their own experiences. The project utilised the intercultural dialogue model discussed and used the lens of migration to explore their commonalities.

This includes a range of contemporary and historical stories about those who have left N.I. to live elsewhere and stories about people who have come to live in N.I. The project was delivered in 3 stages.

- Stage 1 involved recruitment, outreach to youth clubs, youth workers, YP, their families and their communities, with the aim of recruiting 27 YP (9 from each group of BME, PUL and CNR).
- Stage 2 (development stage) involved 12 exploration workshops and 2 days of Treasure hunt on migration - including visits to the Ulster American Folk Park, Titanic Belfast - & a migration film day. The purpose of this was educational and experiential using thematic group work interventions based on the concept of migration in both historical and contemporary terms.
- Stage 3 involved the preparation of the launch of the participants' exhibition and the writing of this report. It also included 3 exhibitions showcasing the final products in different community settings and dissemination workshops.

Research Findings

Observation from the Programme - Stage 1

In August 2017, the participants took part in a two-day residential which aimed to build relationships and facilitate discussion on themes relating to key concepts for the project. In a workshop conducted with and facilitated by the representatives of NWMF the YP were asked for their views on several key terms. These were 'migration', the concept of 'safe space' and the concept of 'diversity'. The participants worked together in considering these key concepts and were encouraged to give their views on each. Some of the responses of the individuals are listed below. As these views came via the group's discussion we have not broken responses down to PUL, CNR or BME groupings.

Firstly, the group was posed with a more explicit question: "is Migration a Bad thing?". The participants at this point initially seemed reluctant to offer opinion. However, a number did express some perspectives on this question which are outlined below.

"Migration is when someone is born in one country and moves to another but that doesn't mean it's bad".
"Migration is not bad because everyone should deserve the same chance in life"
"People from one country get to learn about people from another country"
"If no one migrated everyone would just be exactly the same".
"It helps make shared knowledge, skills, culture and food. "
"If you do see people from another country you understand."

From these initial interactions, it was clear that some participants considered the positive opportunities that migration provides, and the contributory factors made by migrants to society. However, the silence from some indicated that there was still a reluctance to speak, at this point, on what might have been considered as a controversial topic.

The participants were then asked their views on a key term associated with the development of community relations policy in Northern Ireland for the last 10 years - 'safe space'. The YP were asked what exactly the notion of 'safe space' meant to them. This question gained more of a response and the range of interpretations showed that the YP applied this concept to a variety of factors including their own personal safety, a place for the exploration of their own views, attitudes and identities and a place of freedom of expression and freedom of choice. Interpretations of 'safe space' from the YP included:

"No fighting"
"Feeling comfortable how you are - like you do in your home"
"Safe space to talk"
"A place where you are not being judged"
"A place where you can talk about your feelings and people won't laugh at you or your view"
"Somewhere where you don't have to be someone else"
"You feel comfortable doing what you do and feel protected"
"A place where you don't have to live up to expectations"
"Somewhere to chase your dreams"
"Somewhere you aren't in danger"
"Somewhere you can feel yourself and no one is forcing you into stuff"
"A place where no one can kidnap you!"
"Where you can be yourself"
"A space with no gossiping"
"You don't have to hide from people"
"A place you can talk"
"A place where you don't need to worry"
"Somewhere with no peer pressure"
"A place where you can feel equal and not discriminated"

The responses, therefore, indicated that safe space correlated with senses of belonging and security - both physical and emotional.

Finally, participants were asked what they thought about the word 'diversity' and how they interpreted its meaning. Again, there was some reticence about this concept at this stage of the project but differing opinions emerged. Some interpreted the concept as being associated with conflict or animosity between groups, particularly to the divisions between the CNR and PUL communities. When some YP were speaking they used the words 'diversity' and 'division' interchangeably in their responses. Other participants viewed the concept more positively and framed the word 'diversity' in a more positive light. Concepts such as religion, class and ethnicity were also raised in relation to diversity.

Some comments included:

It's when different people are divided and not maybe treated fairly
Everyone is equal but treated differently
Different cultures, different history and races
Different people coming together
Like a book with different chapters
Different genders, races and cultures coming together
Different religions
Celebrating difference
Everyone coming together
Different opinions and backgrounds coming together
Rich and poor coming together
People from different countries and religions coming together
People living side by side
If everyone was the same it would be boring!
Diversity brings us together

Comments from the YP at this point in the project showed a sophisticated awareness of many key points and terms which have become prominent in social debate. These introductory conversations also provided the platform for the later field visits where the YP continued to explore the theme of migration in more detail. At the Ulster American Folk Park and the Titanic Visitors Centre, participants investigated the historical context of migration to Ireland with one another. Group work treasure trails at these venues and in the months afterwards allowed the participants to discuss, think about and debate migration whilst at the same time collecting images, video and their own objects associated with migration. This work formed the basis of a small exhibition on diversity but also provided a pathway to further perspectives on diversity which were then evident in stage 2 of the project.

Observations from the Programme - Stage 2

After the study visits and the associated group interactions, the participants then took part in a follow up workshop with their youth worker to again explore the themes of migration and diversity. On this occasion Participants were provided with some prompts to instigate

further conversation. First, they were shown statistics of the number of people who were living in Northern Ireland who had been born in other countries. The reaction suggested that the participants thought that the numbers would be much higher given the amount of time that is given in the media to the issue of multiculturalism, immigration and racism.

When asked again about how welcome people from other countries should be in Northern Ireland there was a general response from the group which suggested that freedom of movement should be a right, and that help and support on issues such as housing, language, orientation, work, finance and trauma/mental health, should be afforded to migrants who come to live in the region. The group discussed the impact of immigration and one participant concluded that it makes countries "more interesting and more tolerant" as they learn about other cultures.

One participant said "well they aren't coming for any jobs are there? 'cause there are none". This suggested the participants are also acutely aware of the socio-economic problems in the region. Another participant stated they were "aware of the prejudices about jobs that migrants deal with". The group considered the factors that contribute to emigration/migration and their views about coming to/leaving Northern Ireland. It is noteworthy, that the Brexit referendum had recently occurred and may have informed some of the group perspectives of migrants regarding employment. The influence of the Brexit campaign on public perception of migration was a situational factor also raised by two participants during interview which will be discussed later.

In order to draw parallels to contemporary and historical migration the YP were then shown an image of a 'famine ship' in the 1840s. A few weeks previously they had explored the story of migration at the Ulster American Folk Park and had engaged with the movement of people from Ulster to North America from the 18th to 20th centuries. Again, a range of perspectives were put forward and a recognition of this story as part of the historical narrative of Ireland was evident.

"it looks like the ship in the folk park" "this was ages ago"

However, when asked why the participants were on the ship the contemporary story of the 'refugee' experience in Europe was also apparent. Again, the YP showed empathy, shock and support for the experiences of those in the image.

"those people look like they are getting to a better or a safer country".

"they are looking for jobs and a better life".

"we saw this in the folk park, they are going to America"

"It doesn't look like a nice journey".

"maybe there is a war going on"

"they are going to keep their family safe"

"they want a better education and future".

When asked how the people on the boat might feel the YP also showed an understanding of the human aspects of migration including the fear and anxiety but also the opportunities that might come within the context of migration, especially forced migration. The YP noted that those in the image might have felt:

"nervous",

"Scared",

"sea sick"

"excited for a new opportunity"

"bored" "nowhere to escape from diseases"

"worried it might sink"

"no toilet never mind wifi"

The participants were then shown a more recent image of immigration in the context of the current refugee crisis in the Mediterranean. There was a clear correlation by the YP between the two examples but also there was a recognition of the precariousness and danger of the situation for contemporary refugees in the 21st century. The following comments were made at about the imagery of refugees in the Mediterranean.

"At least there was food in the other picture"

"It's a smaller boat and there are far more people on it"

"It is right in the middle of the water"

"it's definitely not as safe"

"Looks really flimsy"

"They have nothing with them"

"It looks illegal"

"There is no room to move"

"It looks like a really dangerous journey"
"They look worried about being caught"
Family would be terrified".

In relation to migration and identity, without prompting the participants then started to talk about how migration has changed Northern Ireland and how senses of belonging are important for those coming to live here. The YP's views showed an understanding of how important the freedom of movement was in creating shared spaces and how tolerance is required to also find shared narratives. They said:

"migrants should be part of the community"
"If they live in Ireland and want to celebrate they can"
"They should wear green or orange or whatever they want to"
"It shouldn't matter where we want to live"
"You shouldn't have to stay in one country"
"Immigration is not a problem"
"People think it's a problem because of the jobs"
"We don't all look the same anyway".

This part of the project afforded a second opportunity for the YP to discuss notions of shared stories and safe spaces as these relate to the theme of migration. The sophistication of the responses at this stage showed a strong understanding of both the human and wider social dimensions of diversity in Northern Ireland. What was striking was that in this workshop the participants were more comfortable and confident in having this interaction than earlier in the project, most likely due to the engagements from the earlier orientation events which created a safer discussion space.

Observations from the Programme - Stage 3

During stage three of the project the group were involved in the preparation of their photographic and video exhibition and participated in a number of thematic workshops. Facilitation allowed YP to reflect on the experience of the project and their learning as a result of participation. It was evident that the programme had provided the opportunity for a range of activities and events that provided fun, developed friendships and allowed intercultural exchange through youth work activities that would not usually be available to groups of YP. From diverse backgrounds, the YP expressed the view that they enjoyed the range of activities in the programme, particularly the residential experiences. Their view was that an opportunity had been afforded to them to experience each other's story

about immigration and migration. It was expressed by the group that they had a lot in common and were not as aware of difference as might be perceived. This was evident in the interactions between members during discussion and also illustrated above. From the group perspective, it was evident that their awareness of migration, immigration and interculturalism was improved through participation.

Reflections of Project - Interviews (x4)

Interviews were also carried out by the researchers with key participants from NWMF involved in the project. These were semi-structured using a set of 15 themes and questions that were informed by the literature and document analysis. Interviews were recorded and transcribed which allowed for immersion in the data and ability to read and re-read notes and listen to interviews in order to extract pertinent themes and emerging topics.

Aims, Objectives and Purpose of the Programme

In considering the aim and objectives, interviewees describe a clear desire to encourage intercultural dialogue and improved understanding through the Shared Stories, Safe Spaces programmes.

The Youth Worker involved in the project's implementation expressed the view that the aim was bringing YP together from different cultures, regardless of city, adding that young people from the project "don't see the colour of skin, or religion" in their experience of each other (Interviewee 1). This was a theme explored by the Director of NWMF who noted that the objective of the project was to have local migrant YP and those from both predominant communities learning together. The hope expressed was that the project will change perception that "each and every one is the same" and promote mutual respect for these differences (Interviewee 2).

A development worker involved in the project had experienced a similar project on migration in Italy and thought this concept might work well in Northern Ireland. His perception was that the aim was to encourage the celebration of diversity and advocated the idea of oneness. In other words that we can be different but also share many commonalities. Also the project's aims were to encourage and instil in YP concepts of sympathy and empathy. The project also involved fun and interests and a chance for YP to express new ideas. For this interviewee it was about a mixed theme of YP "not visiting common ground but common interests" in examining the theme of migration (interviewee 3).

For the parent (migrant) of two YP involved in the programme the experience was described as invaluable, offering her children the opportunity to meet, learn with, and raise awareness of migration and inter-cultural experiences with others from the local communities. The programme's educational, arts and cultural based experiences have

also offered education to the YP about Northern Ireland's changing demographic context (Interviewee 4).

Using Intercultural dialogue as an approach

Interviewee 3 felt that intercultural dialogue approaches offered experiences that were informative and that the programmes would inspire imagination. It was his view that the work of the programme, with YP from different backgrounds, offered opportunities for interaction. This was an educative aspect of the programme and the YP worked together to a shared objective through the Shared Spaces project which he felt would be "inspiration that stays in their memory". For interviewee 1 (Youth Worker) and interviewee 2 (Director) the purpose of using intercultural dialogue as an approach, was educational and a methodology that brings YP together from a range of communities with a priority to change perceptions through intercultural dialogue and in exploring common themes. It is the perception of those interviewed that YP view themselves primarily as individual citizens and this linked to their sense of belonging (interviewee 2).

Developing the Concept - Addressing Barriers to intercultural dialogue

Good relations funding is aimed at bringing communities together in Northern Ireland, building a united community and for those interviewed, there appears to be a narrow definition of the concept. Their experience appeared to indicate that good relations programmes were primarily aimed at the two principal communities (Protestant/Catholic) and thus excluded ethnic groups and those from other cultural groups/nationalities. For interviewees, this indicated a lack of understanding about migration and the experiences of those who come to Northern Ireland and dissipated opportunities for cross cultural learning. The view was expressed that this may create barriers in developing intercultural youth work programmes. Moreover, many migrant communities come to Northern Ireland with experiences and understandings of conflict and thus their voices are also important in the context of the peace process. As a consequence, youth services, informal education settings and formal education currently offers limited opportunities for YP to learn from each other. A further barrier described by participants is the nature of funding as the programme is of one-year duration, funding cycles in Northern Ireland, being time limited, may not support longer term intercultural youth work education and developmental projects such as Shared Stories, Safe Spaces. The possibility of engagement with other ethnic minority and migrant groups across the jurisdiction of Donegal (R.O.I) would benefit the programme. Currently travel restrictions for those with migrant status in both NI and the ROI is a restriction to the development of cross-border awareness and education. The current insecurity over Brexit also adds an additional layer of risk.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This report has articulated the findings from data generated by the Shared Stories, Safe Spaces project, the aim to inform future youth work and educational practice. In the

development of this policy brief, interviews were conducted with key subjects involved in the delivery of the project, a thematic evaluation of secondary data from Shared Stories, Safe Spaces project was also completed and observations were carried out on a number of youth work events associated with the project. Immersion in the group work and residential elements of the programme have afforded the authors an opportunity to hear the views of the YP from varied backgrounds who have collaborated and participated in a range of activities and group work sessions. Conclusions and recommendations are, therefore, informed by findings arising from a number of methods of data collection.

- The Shared Stories, Safe Spaces programme was time limited, small scale and focused in one geographic context. This may impact conclusions and recommendations about the replicability and validity of data and the representativeness of the sample. However given the observed positive outcomes, the authors recommend that the programme's ethos be extended across Northern Ireland, through formal and informal education settings.
- The evidence from the study demonstrated that participants gained immensely from participation and the focus on a common theme providing the underpinning starting point for intercultural dialogue. YP expressed increased knowledge about migration and the movement of people. This included historic and contemporary knowledge of the Irish Famine, Ulster-American migration, and the current experiences of people moving to and from Northern Ireland.
- YP became aware of the unique and personal narrative of other participants. It was evident that through their experiences, commonalities and differences were debated in a robust and rounded way which informed new knowledge among the YP. It is recommended that the thematic approach of the programme be embedded in curriculum and youth work education across Northern Ireland.
- There is an opportunity to inform future education and youth work policy as a result of the Shared Stories, Safe Spaces programmes. The educative elements afford increased knowledge and awareness of belonging and identity in common and this informs preventative practice, reducing potential for exclusion, stereotyping and racism. There is potential to enhance existing school-based and youth work curriculum as a result.
- There is also an opportunity to develop Good Relations programmes across Northern Ireland to take account of inter-cultural dialogue methodology in developing good relations programmes. These are predominantly aimed at improving relations within/across the two principal communities in N.I. and it is recommended that the parameters be extended to take account of the multicultural context that exists in N.I. This is inclusive and expands the awareness of all participants.

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North West Migrants Forum
10 Fountain Street,
Londonderry, BT48 6QX
Northern Ireland

t: 028 713 62184
m: +44 788 020 7223
e: info@nwmf.org.uk
w: www.nwmf.org.uk

